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# Raman spectroscopic study of the multi-anion uranyl mineral schroeckingerite

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## Abstract

Raman spectroscopy complimented with infrared spectroscopy has been used to study the mineral schroeckingerite. The mineral is a multi-anion mineral and has  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ , and  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  units in its structure and bands attributed to these vibrating units are readily identified in the Raman spectra. Symmetric stretching modes at 815, 983 and 1092  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are assigned to  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ , and  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  units, respectively. The antisymmetric stretching modes of  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  are not observed in the Raman spectra but may be readily observed in the infrared spectrum at 898 and 1180  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The antisymmetric stretching mode of  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  is observed in the Raman spectrum at 1374  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  as is also the  $\nu_4$   $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  bending modes at 742 and 707  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . No  $\nu_2$   $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  bending modes are observed in the Raman spectrum of schroeckingerite. All the spectroscopic evidence points to a highly ordered structure of this mineral.

**Keywords:** uranyl sulphate, uranyl carbonate, fluoride, infrared and Raman spectroscopy

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## Introduction

The study of the uranyl carbonates has been undertaken for an extended period of time.<sup>1,2</sup> There are a significant number of compounds containing the uranyl ion<sup>3</sup>. Included in these are many uranyl carbonates.<sup>4-6</sup> These uranyl carbonates may be divided into those based upon tricarbonates and those with single carbonate in the formula such as rutherfordine  $(\text{UO}_2\text{CO}_3)$ <sup>7-9</sup> and blatonite  $(\text{UO}_2\text{CO}_3 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O})$ .<sup>10</sup> Sharpite is a basic uranyl carbonate  $\text{Ca}(\text{UO}_2)_6(\text{CO}_3)_5(\text{OH})_4 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>11,12</sup>. Many of these minerals have been synthesised.<sup>13,14</sup> Among the tricarbonates minerals is the mineral andersonite  $\text{Na}_2\text{Ca}(\text{UO}_2)_6(\text{CO}_3)_3 \cdot x\text{H}_2\text{O}$ <sup>15-17</sup> where x is variable but may be a number between 5 and 6. Many of these minerals may be readily synthesised and there chemistry studied by the normal analytical techniques.<sup>18,19</sup> Uranyl anion sheet topology has been discussed by Burns in some detail.<sup>20,21</sup> Some papers on uranyl carbonates<sup>22-25</sup> and sulphates<sup>26-29</sup> have been published by the authors. Other carbonates are more complex with more than one anion in the structure. The mineral schroeckingerite is a multi-anion mineral and has  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ , and  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  units in its structure

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Among these analytical techniques is infrared and Raman spectroscopy. These techniques serve to find information about the molecular structure of minerals which is not obtained through X-ray diffraction techniques such as single crystal or powder X-ray diffraction. In particular information on the structure of hydroxyl groups may be obtained. Further vibrational spectroscopy determines parameters at the chemical bond level as opposed to the lattice. Often infrared spectroscopy has been applied to the study of the uranyl carbonates<sup>2,15,16,19,30</sup> and yet very little work based upon Raman spectroscopy has been forthcoming.

The uranyl mineral schroeckingerite  $\text{NaCa}_3(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3)_3(\text{SO}_4)\text{F} \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$  is a multi-anion uranyl mineral containing the uranyl tricarbonat anion.<sup>2,31-33</sup> The mineral is probably an uncommon alteration product of uraninite in the oxidised zone of uranium deposits and is probably of post mining origin. Frondel published some information in a US geological report.<sup>34</sup> Infrared spectra of schroeckingerite has been published<sup>35</sup> and Urbanec and Cejka made some tentative interpretation of the infrared spectrum.<sup>5</sup> No vibrational spectroscopic analysis of this mineral has been published. The mineral is triclinic with space group  $P\bar{1}$ .<sup>36</sup> The unit cell parameters are  $a = 9.6340$  |  $b = 9.6350$  |  $c = 14.3910$  |  $\alpha = 91.4100$  |  $\beta = 92.3300$  |  $\gamma = 120.2600$ . There are two formula units in the unit cell.<sup>36</sup> Schroeckingerite is a structurally and chemically complex mineral.<sup>20,21,36</sup> The  $(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3)_3$ , a  $\text{NaO}_6$  octahedron, a  $\text{SO}_4$  tetrahedron and three symmetrically distinct  $\text{CaO}_6$  polyhedra link to form sheets with water molecules located in the interlayer between the sheets where they are held by hydrogen bonds only.<sup>21,36</sup>

Raman spectroscopy has proven very useful for the study of minerals.<sup>22,37-51</sup> Indeed Raman spectroscopy has proven most useful for the study of diagenetically related minerals as often occurs with carbonate minerals.<sup>22,43,44,46-48,52</sup> Some previous studies have been undertaken by the authors using Raman spectroscopy to study complex secondary minerals formed by crystallisation from concentrated sulphate solutions.<sup>53</sup> No detailed spectroscopic studies of the uranyl mineral schroeckingerite has been forthcoming Few Raman studies of any note are available.<sup>54,55</sup> The aim of this paper is to present Raman and infrared spectra of schroeckingerite. The paper is a part of systematic studies of vibrational spectra of minerals of secondary origin in the oxide supergene zone and their synthetic analogs.

## Experimental

### Minerals

The schroeckingerite mineral was obtained from the Mineralogical Research Company and originated from Wamsutter, Sweetwater County, Wyoming, USA. The samples were phase analysed by X-ray diffraction and for chemical composition by EDX measurements. The chemical composition of this mineral has been published (page 624).<sup>56</sup> The mineral corresponds to the formula above  $\text{NaCa}_3(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3)_3(\text{SO}_4)\text{F} \cdot 10\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

## Raman microprobe spectroscopy

The crystals of schroekingierite were placed and oriented on the stage of an Olympus BHSM microscope, equipped with 10x and 50x objectives and part of a Renishaw 1000 Raman microscope system, which also includes a monochromator, a filter system and a Charge Coupled Device (CCD). Raman spectra were excited by a HeNe laser (633 nm) at a resolution of  $2\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the range between 100 and  $4000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Repeated acquisition using the highest magnification was accumulated to improve the signal to noise ratio. Spectra were calibrated using the  $520.5\text{ cm}^{-1}$  line of a silicon wafer. Details of the technique have been published by the authors<sup>22,23,28,57</sup>.

## Mid-IR spectroscopy

Infrared spectra were obtained using a Nicolet Nexus 870 FTIR spectrometer with a smart endurance single bounce diamond ATR cell. Spectra over the  $4000\text{--}525\text{ cm}^{-1}$  range were obtained by the co-addition of 64 scans with a resolution of  $4\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and a mirror velocity of  $0.6329\text{ cm/s}$ . Spectra were co-added to improve the signal to noise ratio.

Spectral manipulation such as baseline adjustment, smoothing and normalisation were performed using the Spectracalc software package GRAMS (Galactic Industries Corporation, NH, USA). Band component analysis was undertaken using the Jandel 'Peakfit' software package which enabled the type of fitting function to be selected and allows specific parameters to be fixed or varied accordingly. Band fitting was done using a Lorentz-Gauss cross-product function with the minimum number of component bands used for the fitting process. The Gauss-Lorentz ratio was maintained at values greater than 0.7 and fitting was undertaken until reproducible results were obtained with squared correlations of  $r^2$  greater than 0.995.

## Results and discussion

### Spectroscopy of uranyl cation

The  $D_{\infty h}$  symmetry of the free uranyl,  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $T_d$  symmetry of the  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  groups, and  $D_{3h}$  symmetry of the  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  groups lowering may cause infrared and Raman activation of all  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ , and  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  vibrations and splitting of doubly and triply degenerate vibrations in the spectra of schroekingierite. In the crystal structure of schroekingierite, there are three symmetrically distinct  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$ , one symmetrically distinct  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  and  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  groups, and symmetrically distinct water molecules. Characteristic vibrations of the uranyl,  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ , ion: the  $\nu_1$  symmetric stretch (approximately  $900\text{--}750\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ),  $\nu_3$  antisymmetric stretch (approximately  $1000\text{--}850\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ), and  $\nu_2$  ( $\delta$ ) doubly degenerate bend (approximately  $300\text{--}200\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) may be observed in the studied Raman and infrared spectra. The tentative assignment of the observed bands is therefore made with regard to these assumptions.

### Spectroscopy of carbonate anion

The free ion,  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  with  $D_{3h}$  symmetry exhibits four normal vibrational modes; a symmetric stretching vibration ( $\nu_1$ ), an out-of-plane bend ( $\nu_2$ ), a doubly degenerate antisymmetric stretch ( $\nu_3$ ) and another doubly degenerate bending mode ( $\nu_4$ ). The symmetries of these modes are  $A_1'$  (R) +  $A_2''$  (IR) +  $E'$  (R, IR) +  $E''$  (R, IR) and occur at 1063, 879, 1415 and 680  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  respectively. Generally, strong Raman modes appear around 1100  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  due to the symmetric stretching vibration ( $\nu_1$ ), of the carbonate groups, while intense IR and weak Raman peaks near 1400  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are due to the antisymmetric stretch ( $\nu_3$ ). Infrared modes near 800  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  are derived from the out-of-plane bend ( $\nu_2$ ). Infrared and Raman modes around 700  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region are due to the in-plane bending mode ( $\nu_4$ ). This mode is doubly degenerate for undistorted  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$  groups. As the carbonate groups become distorted from regular planar symmetry, this mode splits into two components. Infrared and Raman spectroscopy provide sensitive test for structural distortion of  $\text{CO}_3^{2-}$ .

### Spectroscopy of sulphate anion

In aqueous systems, the sulphate anion is of  $T_d$  symmetry and has symmetric stretching mode ( $\nu_1$ ) at 981  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , the antisymmetric stretching mode ( $\nu_3$ ) at 1104  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , the symmetric bending mode ( $\nu_2$ ) at 451  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and the  $\nu_4$  mode at 613  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ <sup>58,59</sup>. For example, Raman spectrum of the mineral chalcantite shows a single symmetric stretching mode at 984.7  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . Two  $\nu_2$  modes are observed at 463 and 445  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and three  $\nu_3$  modes at 1173, 1146 and 1100  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The  $\nu_4$  mode is observed as a single band at 610  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .

The infrared spectroscopy of uranyl sulphate compounds has been undertaken.<sup>31</sup> Raman spectroscopy has also been recently used to understand the chemistry of uranyl sulphates.<sup>28</sup> The spectroscopy has been based on treating the components of uranopilite as separate vibrating entities.<sup>60,61</sup> Thus the infrared spectra are assigned to  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ ,  $(\text{OH})^-$  and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  units. Whether such an assumption is valid is questionable. One of the difficulties of studying the uranyl minerals is the potential overlap of bands from these different units. Both the  $\nu_1$  and  $\nu_3$   $\text{SO}_4$  stretching modes may overlap with UOH deformation modes. Čejka et al. have shown that a band at 930  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is assignable to the antisymmetric stretching modes of the  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  units. The band appears to be very variable in position for zippeites<sup>62</sup>. Bands were identified at between 880 and 924  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . The intensity of the  $\nu_1$  symmetric stretching vibration was very weak in the infrared spectrum of uranopilite and the band at 840  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  was assigned to this vibration.

### Raman Spectroscopy

The Raman spectrum of schroekingerite in the 100 to 1500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region is shown in Figure 1. Distinct sharp bands are observed which may be readily attributed to the various vibrating units of the mineral. The intense sharp band at 815  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  is assigned to the  $\nu_1$   $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  symmetric stretching vibration. In the infrared spectrum of schroekingerite a low intensity band is observed at 817  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  (Figure 2). Urbanec and Čejka published a spectrum of schroekingerite and interpreted the infrared spectrum of schroekingerite in 1979.<sup>5</sup> Čejka published the infrared spectrum of schroekingerite with a comparison with other uranyl carbonates in Reviews in Mineralogy Volume 38.<sup>63</sup> No band positions were provided and no assignment of the bands was forthcoming. A weak infrared band at 816  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  was found<sup>63</sup>. A weak

infrared band is observed at  $898\text{ cm}^{-1}$  which is not observed in the Raman spectrum of schroekingite is assigned to the  $\nu_3 (\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  antisymmetric stretching vibration. In the infrared spectrum of schroekingite as published by Čejka two bands were observed at  $903$  and  $932\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . Jones and Jackson [1993] observed corresponding bands at  $822$  and  $906\text{ cm}^{-1}$ <sup>35</sup>. Wavenumbers of the  $\nu_1 (\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  vibration ( $817\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) and  $\nu_3 (\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  vibration ( $898\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) were used for the calculation of the U-O bond length in uranyl with two empirical relations by Bartlett and Cooney<sup>64</sup>. Obtained values  $1.794$  and  $1.786\text{ Å}$ , respectively, are in agreement with average value  $1.788\text{ Å}$  inferred from the X-ray single crystal analysis.<sup>36</sup>

The Raman band at  $983\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is attributed to the  $\nu_1 (\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  symmetric stretching vibration. In the infrared spectrum of schroekingite the band at  $1180\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is attributed to the  $\nu_3 (\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  antisymmetric stretching vibration. The Raman spectrum of johannite shows an intense sharp intense band at  $1042\text{ cm}^{-1}$  attributed to the  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  symmetric stretching vibration. Three Raman bands are observed at  $1147$ ,  $1100$  and  $1090\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and are assigned to the  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  antisymmetric stretching vibrations. The Raman band at  $1092\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is assigned to the  $\nu_1 (\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  symmetric stretching vibration. In the infrared spectrum of schroekingite two overlapping bands at  $1077$  and  $1097\text{ cm}^{-1}$  are found. Čejka determined bands at  $1078$  (weak) and  $1093\text{ cm}^{-1}$  (strong).<sup>63</sup> One probable assignment is that these bands are assignable to the infrared activated  $\nu_1 (\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  symmetric stretching vibration. In andersonite there are two structurally distinct  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  units and as a consequence two symmetric stretching modes two well resolved bands at  $1092$  and  $1080\text{ cm}^{-1}$  are observed. The band at  $1374\text{ cm}^{-1}$  is assigned to the  $\nu_1 (\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  antisymmetric stretching vibration. In schroekingite, there are three structurally distinct  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  units and as a consequence more symmetric stretching modes and therefore more overlapped bands at  $1097$  and  $1077\text{ cm}^{-1}$  are observed. The infrared bands at  $1365$ ,  $1543$  and  $1574\text{ cm}^{-1}$  are assigned to the  $\nu_3 (\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  antisymmetric stretching vibration and that at  $1180\text{ cm}^{-1}$  to the  $\nu_3 (\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  antisymmetric stretching band. Urbanec and Čejka<sup>5</sup> observed these bands at  $1367$ ,  $1572$  and  $1182\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , respectively, Jones and Jackson [1993] at  $1550$ ,  $1577$  and  $1370\text{ cm}^{-1}$  respectively<sup>35</sup>.

Two Raman bands are observed at  $707$  and  $742\text{ cm}^{-1}$  may be assigned to the  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$   $\nu_4$  in phase bending modes. Two infrared bands are observed at  $705$  and  $739\text{ cm}^{-1}$  which are also assigned to this vibrational mode. Infrared bands were reported by Čejka at exactly these positions<sup>63</sup> and by Jones and Jackson [1993] at  $706$  and  $741\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>35</sup> The  $739\text{ cm}^{-1}$  infrared band was described as of medium intensity and the  $705\text{ cm}^{-1}$  band as medium-weak. The  $\nu_2$  bending mode for carbonates varies from around  $890\text{ cm}^{-1}$  to  $850\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . For smithsonite Farmer reported an infrared band at  $870\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>65</sup> For hydrozincite the infrared band was observed at  $837\text{ cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>65</sup> In this work no Raman bands are observed for schroekingite in this position. In the infrared spectrum two bands are observed at  $817$  and  $842\text{ cm}^{-1}$  which may be ascribed to the  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$   $\nu_2$  bending mode. Two bands are observed in the Raman spectrum of johannite at  $481$  and  $384\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . These bands are assigned to the  $\nu_2$  bending modes of the  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  units. Čejka found bands at  $422$  and  $384\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in the infrared absorption spectra of johannite.<sup>66</sup> The Raman band at  $471\text{ cm}^{-1}$  for schroekingite is assigned to the  $\nu_2 (\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  bending mode.

In the Raman spectrum two bands are observed at 308 and 157  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . In the infrared spectrum of johannite Čejka assigned the two bands at 257 and 216  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  to the doubly degenerate  $\nu_2$  bending vibration of the  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  units. The two Raman bands at 308 and 157  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  fits reasonably well with this observation. However there are significant differences between the infrared spectrum in the low wavenumber region as published by Čejka and the Raman spectrum in this work. There is an intense additional band at 308  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  in the 298 K spectrum. It is proposed that this band is a CaO stretching vibration.

In the Raman spectrum of schroeckingerite in the 2500 to 3900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region, two bands are observed at 3256 and 3432  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  (Figure 3). In the infrared spectrum three bands are resolved at 3252, 3414 and 3481  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  (Figure 4). The bands are attributed to the stretching modes of water in the schroeckingerite structure. In the spectrum reported by Čejka, a strong band was observed at 3455  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  with shoulders at 3260 and 3620  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>63</sup> and Jones and Jackson [1993] bands or shoulders at 3272, 3468 and 3598  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ .<sup>35</sup> The bands at 3455 and 3260 correspond reasonably well with the infrared bands observed in this work. In the spectrum in Figure 4, a low intensity band is observed at 3630  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  which corresponds to the 3620  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  reported by Čejka. A hydrogen bonding network may be inferred in the crystal structure of schroeckingerite from its Raman and infrared spectra, O-H...O bond lengths  $\sim 2.73 - > 3.2 \text{ \AA}$ .<sup>67</sup> This is in agreement with the conclusions from the X-ray single crystal analysis of schroeckingerite.

## Conclusions

The uranyl secondary mineral schroeckingerite is an interesting mineral in that it contains three anions namely sulphate, carbonate and fluoride. The cations in the in this mineral are Na, Ca and  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$  in the form of a uranyl tricarbonate  $[(\text{UO}_2)(\text{CO}_3)_3]$  cluster. Bands which can be attributed to the vibrating units  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$ , and  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  are readily identified in the Raman spectra through the observation of symmetric stretching modes at 815, 983 and 1092  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  respectively. The antisymmetric stretching modes of  $(\text{UO}_2)^{2+}$ ,  $(\text{SO}_4)^{2-}$  are not observed in the Raman spectra but may be readily observed in the infrared spectrum through the observation of bands at 898 and 1180  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  respectively. The antisymmetric stretching mode of  $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  is observed in the Raman spectrum at 1374  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  as is also the  $\nu_4$   $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  bending modes at 742 and 707  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ . No  $\nu_2$   $(\text{CO}_3)^{2-}$  bending modes are observed in the Raman spectrum of schroeckingerite. All this spectroscopic evidence points to a highly ordered structure of this mineral.

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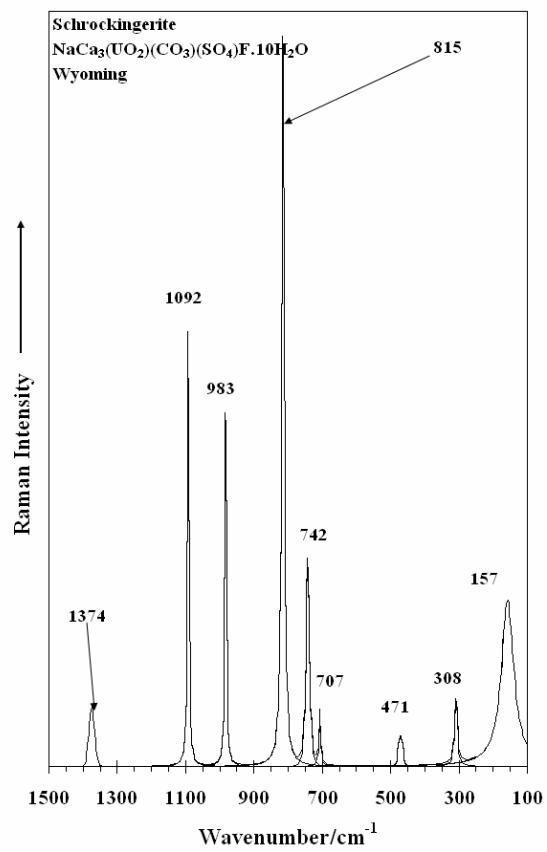
## **List of Figures**

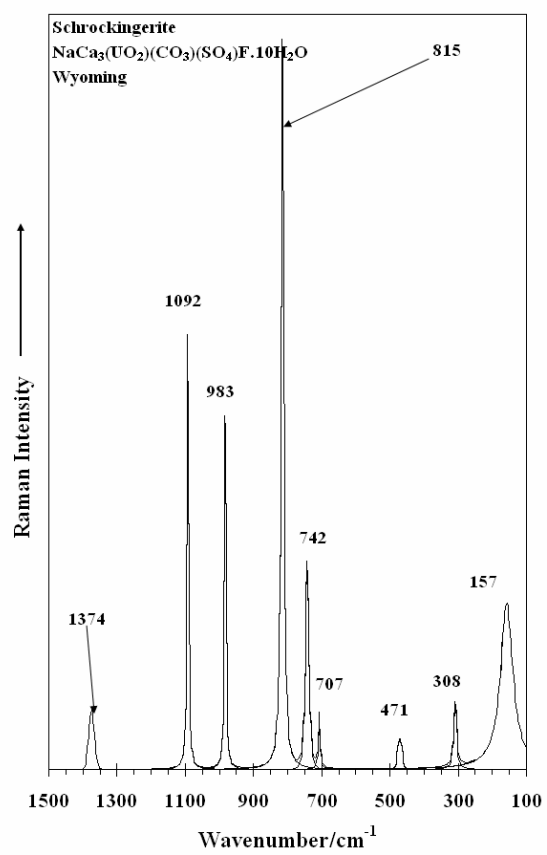
Figure 1 Raman spectrum of schroeckingerite in the 100 to 1500  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region.

Figure 2 Infrared spectrum of schroeckingerite in the 400 to 1900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region.

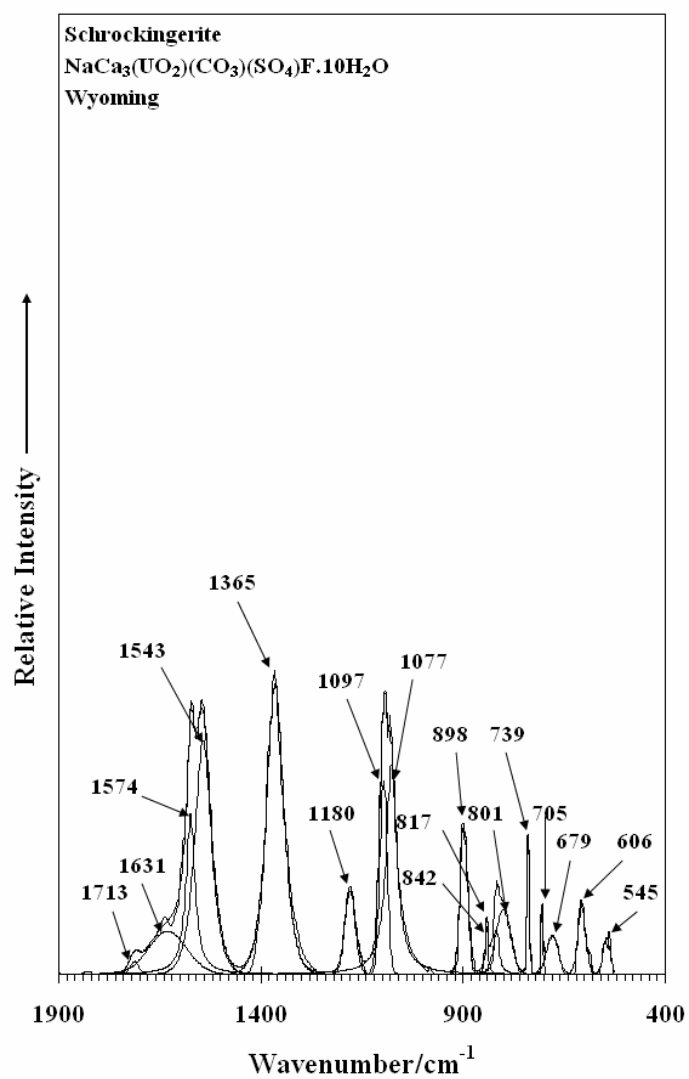
Figure 3 Raman spectrum of schroeckingerite in the 2500 to 3900  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region.

Figure 4 Infrared spectrum of schroeckingerite in the 3000 to 3700  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  region.

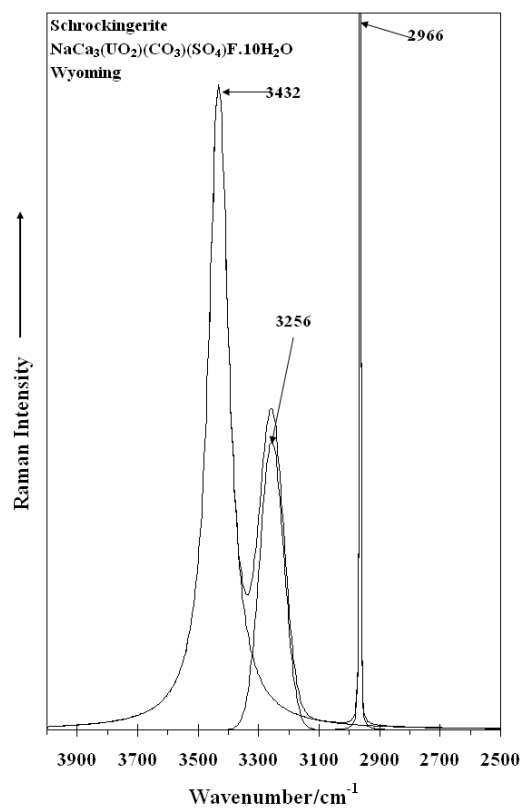




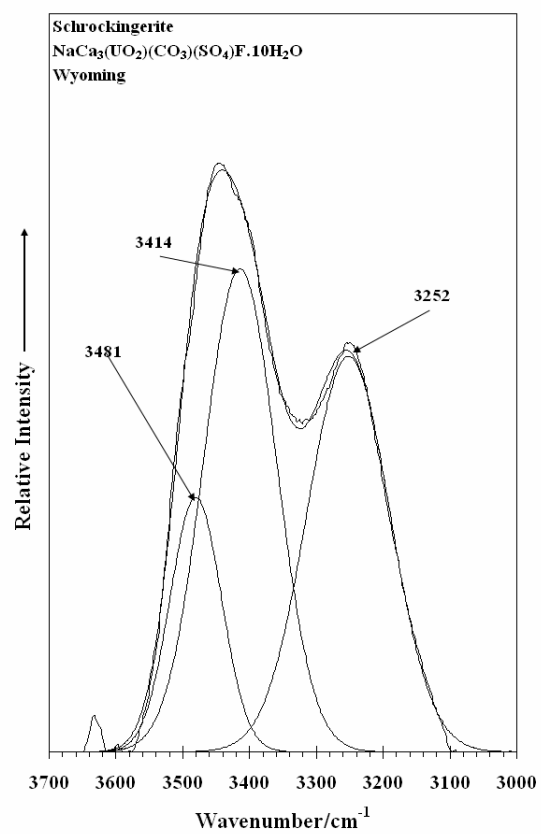
**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**



**Figure 3**



**Figure 4**